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ABSTRACT

Federal Vocational Acts are scrutinized in this paper, focusing on problems of duplication of authority. Federal support has caused a special type of bureaucracy to be developed. Often the legislature creates two or more agencies with the same responsibility. Adult education is often a specific assignment to the public school system, to the community colleges, and to the universities. A large amount of energy is expended by professional people in each system attempting to carry out their assignments. Some reactions to this problem are listed, including (1) laissez faire or no assignment of responsibility, (2) assignment according to age, (3) assignment according to level of content, (4) assignment according to prior commitment, and (5) assignment through a planning process. (Author/SW)

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VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL INSTITUTES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES: DIVERSITY OR DUPLICATION

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The passing of federal iegislation in 1918 and subsequent amentments has caused a special kind of categorical aid to become commonplace in public education in the United States. This categorical aid while helping in great measure the development of education for preparing individuals for specific jobs--a task called vocational education, vocational-technical education, occupational education, trade school education, technical institute education, etc. etc.--has also caused very special problems in the development of the total program of education for individuals.

The development of a philosophy of egalitarian post secondary education has placed colleges and technical institutes, public, private and proprietary post secondary institutions, into new relationships with each other in most if not all states. Coupled with increasing concern on the state level for financing education as well as with expressed concern on the federal level for similar issues relative to accountability, state planning, and the assignment of roles to various types of institutions, this new philosophy of educational opportunity at this level has brought into full view smoldering fires of conflict caused by "empire building" as well as by philosophical concerns. The old battles between the mind and the hand tend to spring out

into new battles over who will provide a total education. Rivalry between traditional vocational education and the more recent occupational education thrusts by colleges may be just one focal point for a number of issues, some more basic and others less so.

The federal support has been both a boon and a bane. By singling out education which purports to prepare an individual for a job and by providing that educational activity with support funds with all of the accompanying bureaucracy which is required for administering it, the federal Vocational Acts have made it possible to develop education which is needed both by our socio-economic requirements as well as by individuals who are seeking a way of supporting themselves financially. On the other hand, this same federal support has caused a special type of bureaucracy to be developed which sometimes is more concerned with its own self preservation than it is with the job it was originally established to do.

The conflict between levels of education and the content of education is often built in by legal provisions in most states. This is exacerbated by the structure which is legally created in most states--with only a few exceptions.

Often the legislature creates two agencies (or even more) with the same responsibility. Adult education is often a specific assignment to the public school system, to the community colleges, and to the universities as well. Then a large amount of energy is expended by professional people in each system attempting to carry out their assignments. The result is great duplication of time, of resources, and of energy and more often

than not a number of gaps which are considered by no one. Furthermore, it is expensive duplication.

There have been a number of reactions to the problems of duplicating authority which have evolved in the several states. I would categorize five:

1. Laissez Faire or no assignment of responsibility. This would permit any agency, institution, or college to do whatever they may wish to with no planning and most often very little coordination.

2. Assignment according to age. In this procedure all persons 18 years of age and over are provided for in community colleges and those under that age by the public school system.

3. Assignment according to level of content. In this instance an attempt is made to divide the programs and the content of occupational education into "less than college grade" or into high school level and post high school level. This is extremely difficult to do--if at all possible--since much of this type of education is in reality ungraded.

4. Assignment according to prior commitment. First come, first served. In this instance a school system or a college is permitted to pre-empt a course or program as a result of having done it first.

5. Assignment through a planning process. In this final instance, overall goals and objectives for the state in reference to occupational education are identified and described. Care is taken to be certain all needs are considered. Provisions is made on a multi approach basis and assignments are made to school systems, colleges, and other institutions on the basis of who can do the job best at this particular time. These assignments are reviewed at regular periodic intervals.

None of these will really work in preserving diversity and preventing duplication--unless the people involved want them to work and understand how to help them work. Problems are caused by people. Some of the issues might be briefly described as follows:

1. Some people resent new strategies and new avenues for providing education. It is not unusual for those in established programs to attempt to ward off the development of new programs purely for self preservation rather than professional analysis.

2. Much of the traditional philosophy of education looks down upon activities involving manual dexterity, unless it is connected to a defined art.

3. Individuals often maintain a proprietary attitude toward the buildings and other facilities for which they are responsible. They will not willingly share these with others.

4. The traditional avenues for allocating funds have been operated and supervised by a bureaucracy which is vitally interested in self-preservation.

5. A great amount of planning is subjected to crisis impacts rather than sound principles of long range planning.

6. A large segment of education has been left out of considerations because of general attitudes toward proprietary schools. A recent study by Wellford Wilms (U.C. at Berkeley) has focused upon several factors in a comparative analysis of proprietary and public vocational education. Among other things he noted that:

   (1) These schools serve a very different clientele with the lower socio-economic status student choosing the proprietary school because he can get his preparation for a job quickly and directly.

   (2) Those students in proprietary schools are more job success oriented than those going to public institutions.

   (3) These two types of schools march to different drummers--the "job market" is the end product in one instance and and the political process of support causes decisions to be made in the other.

In summary I would conclude that there are no permanent solutions which have been suggested up to now. Therefore, the only hope for controlling the negative results of duplication will be to develop total and comprehensive planning which includes all potential segments--public schools, public colleges, private schools, private colleges, and proprietary schools.

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